DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 226 640 HE 015 895

TITLE The Commission's Role in the Review of Degree and Certificate Programs.
INSTITUTION California State Postsecondary Education Commission, Sacramento.
PUB DATE [82]
NOTE 18p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Advisory Committees; Agency Role; *Board of Education Role; *College Programs; *Degree Requirements; Degrees (Academic); Educational Certificates; Evaluation Criteria; Postsecondary Education; Program Development; *Program Evaluation; *State Boards of Education; State Colleges; State Standards; *Statewide Planning
IDENTIFIERS *California State Postsecondary Education Comm

ABSTRACT

The 1981 guidelines for the California Postsecondary Education Commission's program review responsibility are presented, along with an overview of the previous guidelines. The commission's role is advisory in matters relating to the review of new or existing degree programs. The following topics are covered: the legislative mandate for the commission's role in the review of degree and certificate programs; criteria employed in defining the public interest as it relates to academic and occupational programs; six major steps in the annual program planning cycle; steps in the evaluation of regular segmental reviews of existing programs and steps in the encouragement of special intersegmental reviews; and the role of the Intersegmental Program Review Council as a forum for sharing ideas and observations among its members. Criteria for defining the public interest include: student demand, societal needs, the number of existing and proposed programs in the field, the total program cost, and the maintenance and improvement of quality. The yearly program planning cycle includes segmental preparation of 5-year program plans and commission staff review of segmental plans. Definitions are provided that clarify terms and organizations/staff names used in the report, and the appeal procedures is noted. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED226640

THE COMMISSION'S ROLE IN THE REVIEW OF DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Calif Postsecondary Educ Commn

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- ✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

HE015 895

CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

1020 TWELFTH STREET, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814

CONTENTS

		Page
	PREFACE	v
I.	LEGISLATIVE MANDATE FOR THE COMMISSION'S ROLE	1
II.	GUIDING PRINCIPLES	2
	1. Student Demand	2
	2. Societal Needs	2
	3. Appropriateness to Institutional and Segmental Mission	3
	4. The Number of Existing and Proposed Programs in the Field	3
	5. Total Costs of the Program	3
	6. The Maintenance and Improvement of Quality	3
	7. The Advancement of Knowledge	4
III.	DEFINITIONS	4
IV.	COMMISSION REVIEW OF PROGRAM PLANS	5
	Step One: Segmental Preparation of Five-Year Program Plans	5
	Step Two: Commission Staff Review of Segmental Plans	6
	Step Three: Intersegmental Review of Draft State Program Plan	6
	Step Four: Commission Staff Revision of Draft Plan	6
	Step Five: Commission Action on Plan	6
	Step Six: Segmental Revision of Five-Year Program Plans	6
V.	COMMISSION REVIEW OF PROGRAM PROPOSALS	7
	Step One: Segmental Preparation of Program Proposal	7
	Step Two: Commission Staff Review of Proposal	7
	Step Three: Segmental Review of Commission Staff Recommendation	7
	Step Four: Commission Action on Proposals	8
VI.	COMMISSION PARTICIPATION IN THE REVIEW OF EXISTING PROGRAMS	8
	Steps in the Evaluation of Regular Segmental Reviews of Existing Programs	8

Steps in the Encouragement of Special Intersegmental Reviews 9

VII. STAFF RELATIONSHIPS 10

1. Intersegmental Program Review Council 10
2. General Relationships 11

VIII. APPEAL PROCEDURE 11

PREFACE

The emergence of state-level governing and coordinating boards as participants in the determination of higher education policies is a relatively recent phenomenon, a majority of these agencies having come into existence since 1960. (A notable exception, of course, is the New York Board of Regents, created in 1784.) Given the diverse history and present circumstances of collegiate education in the various states, it is not surprising that these state-level agencies are far from uniform in structure and function. Despite variations in function, however, almost all of them are involved in one way or another with the review of academic and occupational programs.

Approaches to program review are conditioned primarily by whether the agency is a regulatory body or merely an advisory body--whether, in other words, it has authority to approve or veto individual programs or only to recommend for or against them. The number of state-level agencies with regulatory powers in program review has grown dramatically since 1960 when only 19 governing and coordinating boards had such authority. As of 1978, state-level agencies in 39 states had approval or veto authority.

California, therefore, is among a shrinking minority of states in which the state-level coordinating agency remains advisory in matters relating to the review of new or existing degree programs. As usual, however, simple comparisons with practices in other states are difficult and often misleading because of special circumstances in California. Few states, for example, have a blueprint which delineates the functions of public colleges and universities as precisely as does the California Master Plan. No state is comparable to California in the size and scope of its public higher education enterprise. But perhaps most important, the three public segments of higher education in California each operate through a central administration which has program review responsibilities. In most other states, no similar level of administration separates all the public campuses from the statewide governing or coordinating board.

Recognizing these differences and aware that there were few, if any, precedents in other states to be guided by, the Coordinating Council for Higher Education in the late 1960s moved to formalize its involvement in program review by drawing up guidelines which identified goals for the review process and outlined procedures to be followed by the Council in its relationship with segmental offices. When finally adopted in March 1971, these guidelines provided for annual Council review of segmental academic plans and of programs outside the "core" which had not appeared in the academic plan for the previous two years or which required additional staff, equipment, or funds to initiate. ("Core" programs were those which

segmental and Council staff agreed in advance were essential to the basic curriculum of a comprehensive campus.) The document did not specify what information academic plans or proposals should contain, nor what criteria were to be applied by the Council in its review, indicating that agreement on these and other essential details was to be reached between Council and segmental staff.

The bill establishing the California Postsecondary Education Commission (AB 770, Statutes of 1974) contained explicit references to a program review responsibility, making clear, however, that the Commission's role was to "review and comment" on programs. An ad hoc committee of the new Commission, after hearing testimony from a wide range of sources, directed the staff to prepare a statement on guidelines and procedures that would incorporate elements of the existing review process which the committee deemed important.

The new guidelines, adopted by the Commission in 1975, borrowed from the Coordinating Council's earlier document but shifted its emphasis from the review of individual program proposals to the review of long-range segmental plans that listed programs projected for two to five years hence. The document also established the Intersegmental Program Review Council and assigned it a central role in advising the Commission on all matters relating to program review. Finally, the 1975 guidelines called attention to the importance of campus and segmental review of existing programs and attempted to establish a framework for monitoring such reviews at the state level. Since that time, recognition has grown nationally that insuring rigorous review of existing programs is at least as vital a concern for state agencies as coordinating the growth of new programs. However, the proper role for state agencies, especially advisory bodies, in this activity has been especially difficult to define.

After five year's experience with the 1975 guidelines, it seemed timely to reexamine their effectiveness and to review their appropriateness to the altered conditions of the 1980s. The Commission therefore engaged Frank Bowen and Lyman Glenny to evaluate state-level program review practices in California. Their report, Quality and Accountability: An Evaluation of Statewide Program Review Procedures, presented to the Commission in April 1981, was based on extensive consultation with Commission staff and with administrators and faculty committees in all segments. Their recommendations tended to endorse the directions outlined in the 1975 guidelines: (a) they called for greater attention in the review process to State and segmental master plans, including institutional mission statements, and less attention to individual program proposals; (b) they encouraged continuing efforts to refine the review of existing programs; and (c) they recommended periodic intersegmental reviews of selected program areas. Their study provided an excellent context for Commission reconsideration of the

1975 guidelines and procedures. During mid-1981, several drafts of the revised guidelines were widely reviewed by representatives of the segments of California higher education. The present version was adopted at the December 1981 meeting of the Commission.

The goal of all the discussions and of the following document has been to contribute to a process that will insure, with economy of means, the greatest possible variety of quality higher education programs for Californians.

THE COMMISSION'S ROLE IN THE REVIEW OF DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

I. LEGISLATIVE MANDATE FOR THE COMMISSION'S ROLE

In establishing the California Postsecondary Education Commission as the statewide planning and coordinating agency for postsecondary education, the Legislature recognized the review of academic and occupational programs as one of the central functions of the Commission. Among the agency's other functions and responsibilities, these relating to program review are designated:

1. *It shall require the governing boards of the segments of public postsecondary education to develop and submit to the commission institutional and systemwide long-range plans in a form determined by the commission after consultation with the segments.*

2. *It shall prepare a five-year state plan for postsecondary education which shall integrate the planning efforts of the public segments and other pertinent plans . . . . In developing such plan, the commission shall consider . . . (b) the range and kinds of programs appropriate to each institution or system . . . [and] (g) the educational programs and resources of private postsecondary institutions . . . .*

6. *It shall review proposals by the public segments for new programs and make recommendations regarding such proposals to the Legislature and the Governor.*

7. *It shall, in consultation with the public segments, establish a schedule for segmental review of selected educational programs, evaluate the program review processes of the segments, and report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.*

8. *It shall serve as a stimulus to the segments and institutions of postsecondary education by projecting and identifying societal and educational needs and encouraging adaptability to change.*

11. *It shall periodically review and make recommendations concerning the need for and availability of postsecondary programs for adult and continuing education.*

13. *It shall maintain and update annually an inventory of all off-campus programs and facilities for education, research and community services operated by public and private institutions of postsecondary education (Education Code: Chapter 1187, Section 22712).*

II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In a system of postsecondary education consisting of a diversity of institutions offering a wide range of programs and services, the review of plans and programs must be guided by a concern for the broad public interest. It must encourage programs that will increase the knowledge and skills of individual citizens and be accessible to everyone with the ability and desire to benefit from them. It must support programs and activities that promise to advance the frontiers of knowledge. And it must seek to foster quality within each segment and institution, preserving institutional identity, initiative, and vitality in the process.

At the same time, it must be alert to possible unnecessary duplication of effort, excessive costs, and inefficiencies in the allocation of resources.

As defined in statute, the Commission's role in the review process is advisory. The Commission's recommendations will be based on criteria which, to varying degrees, should guide the process at all levels. While all of the criteria listed below must be taken into account, they cannot be assigned fixed weight in determining the need for every degree or certificate program. The criteria to be employed by the Commission in defining the public interest as it relates to academic and occupational programs, not necessarily listed in order of importance, are the following:

1. Student Demand

Within reasonable limits, students should have the opportunity to enroll in programs of study in which they are interested and for which they are qualified. Therefore, student demand for programs, indicated primarily by current and projected enrollments, is an important consideration in determining the need for a program.

2. Societal Needs

Postsecondary education institutions bear a responsibility to fulfill societal needs for trained manpower and for an informed citizenry. Even though projecting manpower needs is far from being an exact science, such projections serve as one indication of the need for an existing or proposed program. As a general rule, employment prospects for graduates constitute a more important consideration in those programs oriented toward specialized occupational fields; with certificate or associate degree programs, the local employment market tends to be more significant than in the case of graduate programs where the state and national manpower situation assumes more importance. Recognizing the impossibility of achieving and maintaining a perfect balance between manpower supply

and demand in any given career field, it nevertheless is important to both society and the individual student that the number of persons trained in a field and the number of job openings remain in reasonable balance.

3. Appropriateness to Institutional and Segmental Mission

Programs offered by any institution within a given segment must comply with the delineation of function for that segment set forth in the California Master Plan, as well as with its own statement of mission and special emphasis approved by the segmental governing body.

4. The Number of Existing and Proposed Programs in the Field

An inventory of existing and proposed programs, compiled by the Commission staff from the plans of all segments of postsecondary education, provides the initial indication of apparent duplication or undue proliferation of programs, both within and among the segments. The number of programs alone, of course, cannot be regarded as an indication of unnecessary duplication. Programs with similar titles may have varying objectives; the regional distribution of programs in public institutions is a consideration; and the level of instruction is a factor. In general, each program should be evaluated in relation to all other programs in the subject in order to ascertain if the program under review represents a responsible use of public resources.

5. Total Costs of the Program

The relative costs of a program, when compared with other programs in the same or different program areas, constitute another criterion in the program review process. Included in the consideration of costs are the number of new faculty required and the student/faculty ratios; and the equipment, library resources, and facilities necessary to conduct the program. For a new program, it is necessary to know the source of the funds required for its support, both initially and in the long run.

6. The Maintenance and Improvement of Quality

The public interest demands that educational programs at all levels be of the highest possible quality. While primary responsibility for the quality of programs rests with the institution and the segment, the Commission, for its part, is interested in indications that high standards have been established for the operation and evaluation of the program. In the process, it is necessary to recognize that a proper emphasis on quality may require more than a minimal expenditure of resources.

7. The Advancement of Knowledge

The program review process should encourage the growth and development of creative scholarship. When the advancement of knowledge seems to require the continuation of existing programs or the establishment of programs in new disciplines or in new combinations of existing disciplines, such considerations as costs, student demand, or employment opportunities may become secondary.

III. DEFINITIONS

Program

An academic or occupational program is a series of courses arranged in a sequence leading to a degree or certificate.

Program Plan

An academic or occupational program plan contains at least an inventory of the programs offered or projected by the campuses within a segment or by a group of independent or private institutions, including a proposed timetable for the implementation of projected programs. A plan should also indicate any special curricular emphases approved for individual campuses, and may also contain narrative descriptions of problem areas, program trends, future needs, and other matters relating to academic planning. In general, academic plans are prepared for five-year periods and revised and updated annually.

Program Proposal

A program proposal is a document prepared by a campus describing and justifying the need for a degree or certificate program it wishes to establish.

Research Center or Organized Research Unit

A research center or organized research unit is a formal organization created to manage a number of research efforts within a university or segment.

Intersegmental Program Review Council

The Intersegmental Program Review Council is an advisory body whose function is to assist the staff of the Commission in coordination and review of academic plans and programs. The Council will consist of designated representatives from the office of the President of the

University of California, the office of the Chancellor of the State University and Colleges, the office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, the California Postsecondary Education Commission, and of a representative designated by the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities. The Council will also consult, on appropriate issues, with representatives from the State Department of Education, the Commission on Teacher Preparation and Licensure, the Council for Private Postsecondary Education, and the California Advisory Council on Vocational Education.

Segmental Staff

Segmental staff refers to the designated representatives of the chief executive officers of the segments.

Commission Staff

Commission staff refers to the designated representatives of the Director of the Commission.

IV. COMMISSION REVIEW OF PROGRAM PLANS

Commission staff will participate in the annual program planning cycle with each of the public segments and will prepare an annually revised State Program Plan. The six major steps in this yearly cycle are outlined below.

Step One: Segmental Preparation of Five-year Program Plans

By July 1 each year, segmental offices will prepare a five-year academic and occupational program master plan for their segment and submit a copy of this plan to the Commission staff. This master plan should contain a systemwide inventory of existing graduate and undergraduate degree and certificate programs and organized research units, along with a list of projected degree or certificate programs and research centers planned for establishment during the next five years. The list should be accompanied by a brief statement (roughly one page) for each projected program containing a description of the program and the reasons for proposing it, the relationship of the program to existing programs and to the mission of the campus, its new staff and facilities requirements, and the possible date for the program's initiation.

In addition, this segmental program master plan should indicate what existing programs on each campus are scheduled for review during each

of the next two years. It should also identify campuses that have been designated as centers for the special development of certain curricular areas, comment on fields of study in which supply and demand imbalances may be developing, and discuss any other issues related to program review the segment chooses to single out for attention.

Step Two: Commission Staff Review of Segmental Plans

By August 15, the Commission staff will integrate the segmental plans and prepare a draft of a five-year State Program Plan, identifying potential problem areas. In its review and integration of segmental plans, Commission staff will take into account the criteria of need listed on pp. 2-4 above and will be alert to other issues arising from an examination of segmental plans from an intersegmental perspective.

Step Three: Intersegmental Review of Draft State Program Plan

By October 1, the Intersegmental Program Review Council will meet to refine the State Program Plan and attempt resolution of issues. The Council will consider possible conflicts among the academic master plans of the segments, review Commission staff recommendations, and advise Commission staff on other matters relating to the preparation of the State Program Plan, including needed manpower and related curricular studies which should be undertaken by the Commission.

Step Four: Commission Staff Revision of Draft Plan

By December 15, in consultation with the Council, Commission staff will prepare a revised draft of the State Program Plan, including issues that the Council was unable to resolve, for presentation to the Commission for its review and consideration.

Step Five: Commission Action on Plan

By January 15, after discussion and possible amendment of the plan prepared by the staff, the Commission will adopt the final version of the State Program Plan and submit it to the Governor and Legislature.

Step Six: Segmental Revision of Five-Year Program Plans

Finally, the segments should consider revising their five-year program plans in harmony with recommendations in the State Program Plan as adopted by the Commission.

V. COMMISSION REVIEW OF PROGRAM PROPOSALS

By a careful screening of projected programs listed in the segmental program master plans, Commission staff expects to reduce the number of detailed proposals for individual programs it reviews intensively. If the Commission staff has not challenged a projected program appearing in a segmental master plan for at least two years immediately prior to its intended implementation date, concurrence by Commission staff is to be assumed. If a proposed program has not appeared in the segmental master plan, or if the need for the program has been questioned by Commission staff in the State Program Plan, Commission staff will review the proposal as follows:

Step One: Segmental Preparation of Program Proposal

Segmental offices will submit information in a mutually agreeable form about proposed programs to the Commission staff for review. All proposals for programs to be initiated in the fall term should be submitted to the Commission staff before March 15. The deadline for proposals for programs scheduled to begin in the winter or spring term is October 15.

Segmental staff will also notify the Commission of their approval of program changes that do not require Commission staff review (such as proposed programs that have been projected in the segment's program plan for at least two years, changes in name, options, or areas of concentration within a program) by forwarding a brief description of the approved change to the Commission staff for its information.

Step Two: Commission Staff Review of Proposal

Commission staff will review the proposal in accordance with the criteria stated on pp. 2-4 above. If the staff does not comment on the proposal within 60 days after it is received, concurrence with the segmental recommendation for approval is to be assumed. The Commission staff will direct questions regarding the proposal to the segmental office rather than to the campus or program staff directly involved, or will consult the segmental office before communicating with a campus.

Step Three: Segmental Review of Commission Staff Recommendation

If a segment disagrees with a recommendation from the Commission staff regarding a program proposal, either party may bring the proposal to the Commission for its review and comment.

Step Four: Commission Action on Proposals

In accordance with its legislative mandate, the Commission will report its actions regarding proposals to the Legislature and the Governor, usually in the form of a summary of program review activities prepared in November or December of each year.

VI. COMMISSION PARTICIPATION IN THE REVIEW OF EXISTING PROGRAMS

The public interest in program review on the campuses of public institutions requires assurance that all academic and occupational programs are reviewed regularly and that the reviews are reasonably rigorous and objective. Since a systematic evaluation of existing degree programs is an essential part of the academic process, the responsibility for the quantitative and qualitative review of existing programs must rest with the campus and the segments. But because of its mandate to establish a schedule for segmental review of selected educational programs and to evaluate the program review processes of the segments (Item 7, p. 1 above), the Commission will promote the adoption of a schedule on each campus and encourage consistency in the structure and thoroughness of the review procedures. The Commission's interest in segmental review procedures, therefore, will be directed toward these ends:

a. To make certain that systematic review of existing programs is occurring on all campuses within each of the segments;

b. To suggest if necessary, and in consultation with the Intersegmental Program Review Council, procedures to be followed in reviewing programs and in reporting the results of those reviews; and

c. To evaluate periodically the effectiveness of the program review practices of the segments.

The Commission staff will seek to achieve these ends in two ways: through (1) its evaluation of regular segmental reviews of existing programs, and (2) its encouragement of special intersegmental reviews of selected program areas, as follows:

Steps in the Evaluation of Regular Segmental Reviews of Existing Programs

The Commission staff will request the segments to submit by November 1 each year a summary of program review activities at the campus and systemwide levels during the most recent academic year. The summary

should report: (a) what programs and program areas were reviewed; (b) what kind of review was conducted (i.e., regularly scheduled review of program or department, standard review of recently initiated program, special review of program with problems, review of curriculum in preparation for accreditation visit, etc.); (c) who conducted the review; (d) what criteria were used to evaluate the program (i.e., enrollment and placement records, caliber of staff, relation to similar programs on campuses within the segment and in other segments, etc.); (e) what were the significant conclusions; and (f) what actions resulted from the review (continuation, modification, termination, or other).

The summary report should also list all programs terminated on each campus during the academic year.

Steps in the Encouragement of Special Intersegmental Reviews

In addition to reporting on the annual program review activities within the segments, Commission staff, in consultation with IPRC, will recommend a field, or fields, of study to be reviewed concurrently by all the segments during the following year. This special review is not intended to interfere with or replace any other reviews of existing programs routinely carried out by the central offices of the public segments or by their individual campuses. Indeed, such reviews may supply all information necessary for the intersegmental survey. The purpose of the intersegmental review is to establish a comprehensive body of information which should lead to more informed judgments concerning curricular issues at all levels of planning.

The intersegmental review should help answer some of the following questions:

a. Do the degree or certificate programs within the field appear to be overproducing or underproducing graduates for the related job market?

b. Do degree or certificate programs within the field represent appropriate adherence to the principle of differentiation of function?

c. What articulation or career ladder provisions are in effect within the program area?

d. What developments within related occupational fields have implications for educational programs?

The Commission staff, in consultation with the Council, will select the program area or areas to be reviewed. The selection will be based on the following considerations:

a. Significant changes in enrollment over a five-year period;
b. Uneven regional distribution of programs;
c. Large number of projected programs;
d. Rapidly changing job markets for graduates of programs; and
e. Special circumstances (request from the Governor or Legislature, unusual public interest, review in one segment already planned, or other special conditions).

For those program areas selected for review, the Commission staff will request information from each segment in the following categories, as appropriate:

a. Five-year history of enrollments and degrees granted in areas under review;

b. Program costs;

c. Records of placements; and

d. Institutional comments on relation of program to institutional mission, results of recent reviews of program, importance to students, and future plans for the program.

Commission staff will be responsible for integrating the information from all the segments, for reviewing developments within the program area and related occupational fields, and for making recommendations. In those areas in which an extensive written report seems appropriate, the Commission staff will work with a specially appointed technical advisory committee in preparing the report or consider hiring a consultant to conduct the study.

VII. STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

1. Intersegmental Program Review Council

In addition to the specific functions identified in this document, the Council will serve as the established forum for the sharing of ideas, observations, and concerns among its members. Developments related to program review within any segment--for example, plans for, or the status of, systemwide reviews of a certain field of study--should be reported at IPRC meetings. The Council will function in whatever ways seem feasible to identify, discuss, and help resolve curricular issues with intersegmental implications.

2. General Relationships

Between meetings of the Intersegmental Program Review Council, Commission staff may:

a. Initiate discussion with any segment on matters of mutual interest;

b. Request information necessary for carrying out the Commission's program review responsibilities;

c. Suggest, where appropriate, cooperative programs involving two or more segments; and

d. Identify and comment on apparent unmet needs in postsecondary programs and services.

VIII. APPEAL PROCEDURE

Any action or decision resulting from procedures described in this document may be appealed to the full Commission by any of the parties represented on the Intersegmental Program Review Council.